

OPINION PAGES

*Guest
VIEW*

Marijuana

Drug needs more testing before used medicinally

From the San Diego Union-Tribune

Medicinal marijuana use is all the rage right now. But studies showing the drug is good medicine are decidedly mixed, with the negative data outweighing the positive.

Before widespread use of any medicine is allowed in this country, rigorous testing is required. That's why the Clinton administration should direct the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a definitive study on the medicinal use of marijuana.

It should have been done long ago. Despite claims that the drug can alleviate the suffering of cancer and glaucoma patients, it also has some serious side effects, namely getting stoned. National Institute of Health experts say there's no evidence that smoking marijuana provides any health benefits, particularly none that can't be found through a synthetic alternative, absent the side effects.

However, some of the more reckless activists favor medicinal marijuana use, specifically for the side effect of getting stoned. To allow our current lax attitudes toward drug use to become mixed up in the debate over the purported medicinal benefits of marijuana is asking for trouble.

That's precisely why scientific experts should resolve the medicinal marijuana debate. A National Academy of Sciences study that includes clinical trials could prove whether smoking marijuana has medical value, and if so, exactly how it should be used. Medicinal marijuana laws and the national debate are premature without the scientific certainty of whether the drug can be used safely.

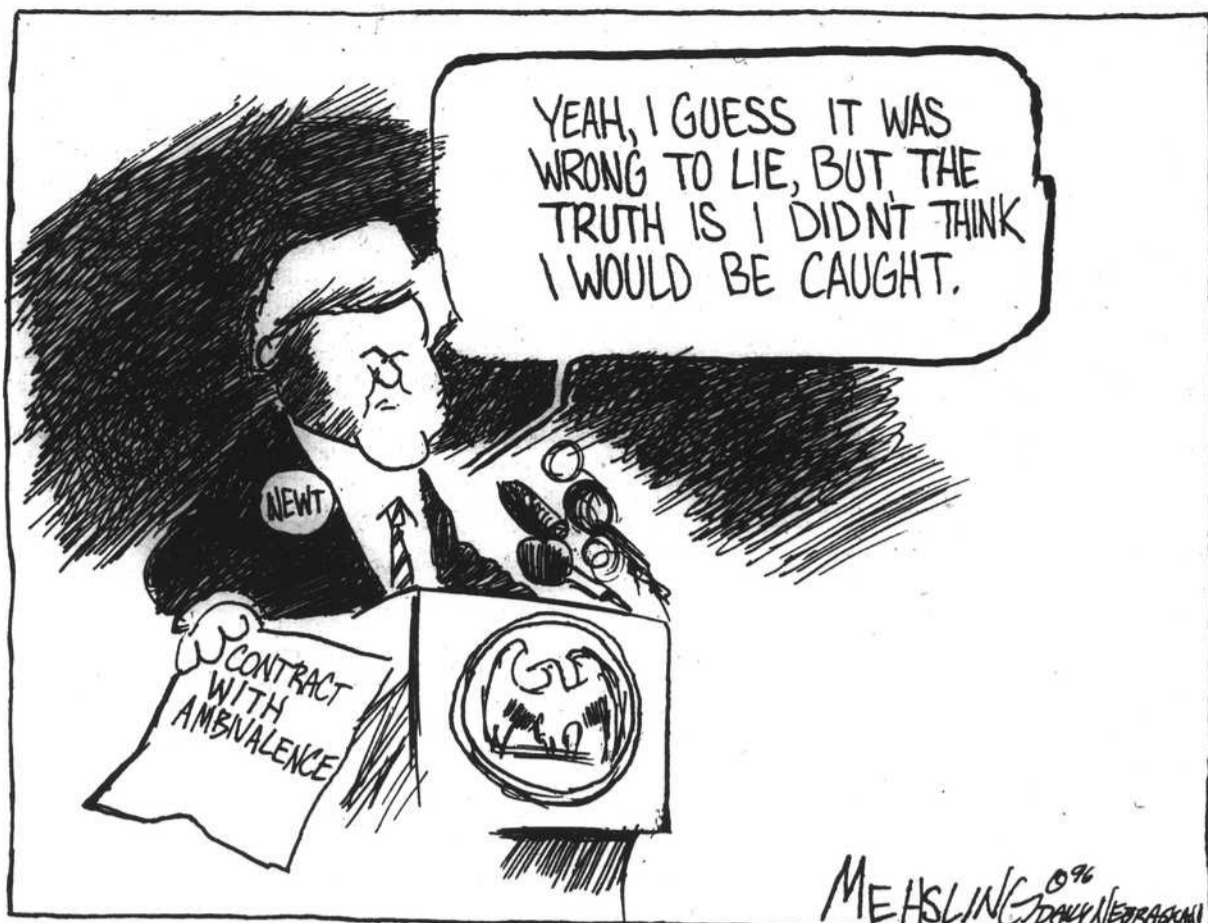
Until we know if marijuana is an effective medicine, the Clinton administration is right to crack down on doctors who prescribe it. While states should exercise certain powers, promoting drug use is not one of them. Neither state legislatures nor voters should be deciding what medical procedures and drugs are permissible. Science must decide that.

Research and clinical trials of marijuana use could take some time. But just as doctors are not allowed to prescribe or recommend any drug until it is proven safe, they should not be allowed to do so with marijuana. Doctors who recommend marijuana before the research is completed should be penalized.

Federal drug czar Barry McCaffrey warns that doctors found recommending marijuana to patients could lose their license to prescribe drugs or face criminal charges. That is reasonable, since doctors who prescribe other drugs that lack FDA approval are subject to penalties. Why should marijuana be any different?

Until conclusive scientific studies show that marijuana is safe and effective for medicinal purposes, doctors should not encourage its use.

*Mehsling's
VIEW*



*Anthony
NGUYEN*

Surfin' toward a new semester

Opinion page to change as semester progresses

Sitting at home on a Saturday night. Carousing the 'net. I'm not looking for love. No, just looking for other university newspapers on the web. A site on how to get a date in ten days, "guaranteed," catches my eye. Stop. Point and click. Nope, it's nothing that'll help my "friend's" problems. Time to move on. Too much coffee. Too much sex on the brain. But I must, must find other dailies to look at. I stop for a quick five push-ups, the ice cream kind helps me to maintain my Mr. Universe physique—then return back to the computer.

Listening to Dave Matthews Band. Neighbors upstairs have either just discovered gravity "does" exist or are experimenting with the acoustical signature of dropped bowling balls. Oh, well, that's life.

Welcome back, Kotter. Okay, so you might not have the swagger of a Vinny Barbarino, or the hair or clothes for that matter. But you are back in school, and it's time to get back in the groove. Regardless if your definition of groove is 4.0 or skipping classes—the second semester has begun.

So, why am I spending Saturday night, all by my lonesome self, surfing the net and looking at university newspaper sites? Well, lack of a good social life... okay, truthfully, no social life and my current job at the DN has me in a tizzy. (Do people use that word anymore?)

It all started back in the blizzard of '86, and dem 'ole bastages in Gulp Canyon...whoops, wrong life. Really, though, it began when Editor-in-Chief Doug Kouma hired me to be the new Opinion Pages



"I'm not a person who makes promises lightly, so to avoid any letters to me, I won't promise mega-blockbuster-kick-ass-and-don't-take-names changes."

Editor for the spring. My first thought was, COOL! Okay not really, but thinking about grabbing a burger and voicing it aloud are two different things.

I left for Christmas break stress free—I mean, no classes and I still work for the DN—what more could you ask for? Came back this past week and that's when the hammer fell on me unmercifully. Picas and points? Headers and decks? Layout pages? Budget?

Tell me when this ride stops, 'cuz I think I'm gonna puke. Hey man, I'm only a biochem and philos major. And that's why I'm surfing the 'net on a Saturday night. I needed to get the creative juices flowing, get back in the writing mood, and find what I think works or doesn't work in an opinion page.

The opinion pages this semester will keep a lot of the components you expect—like letters to the editor (I really fought against it, but...), guest commentary, our weekly columnists, the editorial and, of course, the ed cartoon. But I hope to add things like crossfire-style debates—to get us all to think about the issues which affect us as students, as well as the community-at-large. I hope to package things to make the opinion pages more interesting.

I'm not a person who makes promises lightly, so to avoid any letters to me, I won't promise mega-blockbuster-kick-ass-and-don't-take-names changes. It'll be a gradual process. Painful to me, but hopefully not to you.

And as you can tell, I won't be coming to you in a weekly format anymore, but I'll try to stop by every couple of weeks to bore you—if I haven't gone crazy by then. I hope that in the next few weeks you'll enjoy some of the changes made to the opinion pages, and that eventually you'll look at the changes as a regular feature. Well, please forgive any editorial faux pas I make these next few weeks and throughout the semester. So, until next time, enjoy.

Nguyen is a senior biochemistry and philosophy major and the Daily Nebraskan opinion editor.

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